

Introduction: Relationships & God’s Communicable Attributes

One of the clearest ways we reflect God's character as His image-bearers is through our relationships with others. God possesses what theologians call **communicable attributes** (those attributes of His character that human beings are capable of reflecting in a limited way). These include things like love, goodness, mercy, patience, and faithfulness. Because God created us in His image, He has given us the capacity to express these attributes in our relationships with others. Relationships, therefore, are not incidental to our existence, but they are an important part of God's design for us as His image-bearers.

Main Point: Because _____ can have a powerful influence on our lives, we must be careful about who we allow to influence us and how we seek to influence others toward Christ.

Galatians 4:12-20

- **Paul begins with a deeply personal _____ to the Galatians. (4:12a)**

(1) There is a transition here as Paul moves from his personal testimony (1:6-2:14), his main argument (2:15-21), and his biblical and theological support (3:1-4:11).

(2) He exhorts the Galatians to _____ him.

“Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.”

➤ He often presents himself as an example for others to follow (1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 3:17).

➤ Given what follows, this is almost certainly a reference to his _____ as he ministered among them, living as if he were a Gentile (1 Cor. 9:20-21).

“In short, he abandoned the Law as the proper way to attain righteousness before God. In this sense, he became like the Galatians, Gentiles who had no (and needed no) relationship to the Law. This, Paul’s entreaty to them is to return back to that Law-less state, rather than move towards the Law as they are presently.” – Michael Burer

- **Paul reminds the Galatians of the _____ nature of their time together in the past and contrasts it with what is happening in the present. (4:12b-16)**

(1) They treated Paul with _____ despite the circumstances surrounding his visit.

“a bodily ailment”

➤ This could have been some kind of disease or even the physical consequences of persecution (Acts 14:19; 2 Cor. 11:23-26).

(2) This condition was serious enough that the Galatians would have been _____ reject him.

“my condition was a trial to you”

“you did not scorn or despise me”

(3) Instead, they willingly _____ Paul and his message.

“as an angel of God”

“as Christ Jesus”

“This emphasizes the full acceptance of his gospel message and him as the bearer of that message. It is as if there is no difference between Paul and Christ in this regard in the Galatians’ thinking.” – Michael Burer

Key Points: The _____ that we have with other believers can be a great source of encouragement to us, especially when we focus on the work of the Lord within those relationships.

(4) They seem to have turned away from the work of the _____ in their midst.

“What then has become of your blessedness?”

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Key Points: The history that we have with other believers can be a great source of encouragement to us, especially when we focus on the work of the Lord within those relationships.

(4) They seem to have turned away from the work of the Spirit in their midst.

“What then has become of your blessedness?”

➤ By placing themselves under the Law, they remove themselves from the place of blessing they have in Christ.

(5) The Galatians had been so devoted to Paul previously that they would've harmed themselves to help him.
"you would've gouged out your eyes and given them to me"

(6) In view of this, he asks a question to show the absurdity of their present in attitude towards him.
"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

Key Point: We must be willing to hear the truth spoken to us in love by our fellow believers, especially when we have an established history together.

• **Paul then contrasts the motives of the false teachers with his own pastoral heart for the Galatians. (4:17-20)**

(1) The false teachers have only a selfish interest in the Galatians.
"They make much of you, but for no good purpose."

➤ The false teachers have very real emotional interest in the Galatians, but it is not a good one.

"They want to shut you out"

"that you make much of them"

➤ The false teachers take the focus of Christ and place it on themselves and their teaching about Law.

Key Point: There are some people even within the church who would seek to use their relationship with us for their own selfish purposes.

(2) Paul's interest in them is for their good in Christ and always has been!
"not only when I am present with you"

(3) He then uses the metaphor of giving birth to show both his personal love for them and the pain that he feels because of their present situation.

➤ Paul views himself as their spiritual parent.

➤ He is again in pain for them as they are wrestling with the truth of the Gospel.

➤ He longs to see them embrace the Gospel in its fullness.
"until Christ is formed in you"

"[This] is not a reference to salvation per se but rather to the Galatians living out Christ's presence fully in their lives, something they are not presently doing in their desire to return to the Law...He desires that the Galatians fully live out the life of Christ, that it be completely evident among them, but this cannot occur unless they die to the Law." – Michael Burer

(4) He concludes by stating that he longs to be with them.

Key Point: God-honoring relationships are focused on a common identity in Christ and in seeking the good of others above our own interests.

Concluding Thought

Christ is formed in us and we grow into maturity as we understand and live out the implications of the Gospel.

Gal. 2:20—I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.